

DATE: October 14, 1974

Genetics Department (Pre- and Post-docs)

FROM : Joshua Lederberg

SUBJECT: Genetics as a profession; philosophy and sociology of science

Many of you have expressed your concern about hearing more of the larger frame of a professional career in your chosen discipline.

This has led me to wonder how many of you would wish to participate in a seminar that I might lead on this theme. I had in mind a program of about 6 evenings in Spring Quarter (1975), for Genetics pre- and post-docs only. There would be a non-trivial burden of background reading; and I will certainly not be offended to hear that you are too busy. Whether or not I undertake this will depend on the response. So please return your comments, and I welcome your suggestions.

My tentative thoughts on topics include:

1. The scientific enterprise and public truth: its goals, history, (subsystems) structure and mechanisms. The growth of knowledge and criteria of problem choice. Styles of discovery.
2. The fiscal support system; how NIH works; "grantsmanship".
3. The communication system: journals, invisible colleges; societies; disciplines. Support systems: reagents and instruments; library; computers.
4. The career system: university structure; promotions; gatekeepers and peer-review.
5. The personal and interpersonal problems of a scientific career. The rules of the game: ethics of science.
6. Outside the research system: (A) policy role of scientist; the scientist as expert and social critic; (B) science policy: what society expects, fears and gets from science, and how this is assessed.

Readings will include: Beveridge, "Art of Scientific Investigation".

and some selected biographical texts.